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A BLACK MARE WITH A WHITE STAR.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAP. I.

At precisely five minutes to twelve o'clock, on a certain October night in the last decade of the last century, a post-chaise drove up to the door of the *Brown Bear*, a well-known family hotel and posting-house in the ancient town of Derby.

'Another touch of the high toby again, Jim,' remarked the postilion confidentially to his friend the hostler, as he slid his foot out of the stirrup, and dismounted. 'Gemman inside has had his purse and watch faked, and a nice temper he's in.'

'Where did it happen this time?' asked Jim.

'Just t' other side Spondon. You know Deadman's Lane? Well, that were the exact spot.'

'Ay, ay! And was it *the* one this time again?'

'Who else should it be in this part of the country? It were the same black mare with a white star that I've seen twice afore, and with the same black fellow astride her—as black as Old Nick himself he is, from top to toe, and a rare good rider too.'

Jim's powers of conversation being of a limited order, he resorted to a long low whistle, by way of expressing his interest and surprise at the news told him by his friend, and then went on with his work.

Meanwhile, the stranger inside the chaise had been released by an obsequious waiter, and ushered into the shut-up coffee-room, in the grate of which a remnant of fire still lingered. The candles were relighted, and then the landlord came in person to take the orders of his guest.

'Would the gentleman like to have a fire lighted in a private sitting-room? It could be done in five minutes,' he said.

'Thank you; not to-night,' said the stranger. 'In the morning, I will look at your rooms. For the present, this one will do excellently.—Supper, did you say? Yes; bring me a crust of home-made bread, and a mug of your best old ale. And then to bed.'

By this time, he had laid aside his long blue

fur-collared travelling-cloak, and his fur travelling-cap, and stood revealed as a bright-eyed, fresh-coloured, middle-aged gentleman, with the not-to-be-mistaken air of a military man, although his present dress was that of a civilian; with iron-gray, unpowdered hair, cut short in front, but worked into a queue behind; and with small, gray, mutton-chop whiskers. Judging by the frown on his otherwise pleasant-looking face, he was unmistakably out of temper; but it was not till he had broken the smouldering lump of coal in the grate into minute fragments, and thereby relieved his overcharged feelings, that he vouchsafed an explanation to the landlord.

'A pretty welcome to one's native town!' he began—'a very pretty welcome indeed, after an absence of five and thirty years, to be set upon by a ruffian, and have to decide at a moment's notice between giving up one's purse and having a bullet through one's brain! I had better never have left the Canadas.' He spoke in a captious, high-pitched voice, and as if he were more annoyed than angered at what had befallen him—less troubled by the loss of his purse than by the fact of his having been compelled to yield it up without a struggle.

The landlord and the waiter exchanged looks. 'Sorry, I'm sure, sir, to hear of your accident,' said the former in a tone of respectful sympathy. 'For the last three years, the neighbourhood of this town has been infested by one of the biggest villains unhung; and you, sir, are neither the first nor the second that has suffered in like manner at his hands. A clever villain he is, too; and, so far, has set all the constables in the country at defiance. Did you notice, sir, whether or not his face was blackened?'

'I did,' said the stranger. 'He wore no mask of any kind, such as I have heard that highwaymen customarily wear by way of disguise. His face was perfectly black, either naturally or artificially so.'

'And he rode a black horse, did he not, sir?'

'Either a black or a very dark bay one; a horse with a large white star in the centre of its forehead. That much I could see by the light of the chaise-lamps.'

'The very same man,' said the landlord emphatically.

The stranger drew a chair up to the fire, and sat down. He was evidently interested. 'You say, landlord, that I am not the first who has been robbed by this fellow?'

'No indeed, sir; not by a dozen, or more than that. Hardly a single month has passed during any winter these three years without our hearing tell of at least one person meeting the same fate that befell you, sir, to-night. One time, it was one of our most respected merchants returning home from a party with fifty guineas in his pocket, which he had won at whist. Another time, it was the Dean of Lichfield who was stopped. Mr Dean was cased of watch, snuff-box, and purse. Next time, it was Lady Knutsford and her two daughters, who were stopped as they were on their way home from a ball at the assembly-rooms. Her Ladyship's necklace and rings were said to be worth six hundred pounds. These, and a dozen other robberies of less note, all perpetrated by the same man, with a blackened face, and mounted on a black mare that has a large white star in the middle of its forehead, have kept our little town in quite a ferment for some time past, and have driven our chief-constable to the verge of despair. I believe that you, sir, are the first that has been stopped this season, and it is a sign that winter is setting in. Tom Crooke, an auctioneer of this town, was the last man that was robbed last season, and his little affair happened about the beginning of April.'

'Tom Crooke?—I think I recollect that name,' muttered the stranger below his breath.

'Yes, sir,' resumed the voluble landlord; 'and it is a singular fact that all these robberies, the work of one man, are committed within a radius of twelve miles from this town; now on the London Road, now on the Nottingham Road, now on the Ashbourne Road, now on the Duffield Road. The rider of the black mare with the white star seems to be here, there, and everywhere, and to be wonderfully lucky in picking out as his victims people having about them something worth taking. When he has done his little bit of business, he seems to vanish as mysteriously as he came, and is never heard of again, either there or elsewhere, till he turns up suddenly, a few weeks later, not a dozen miles from the same spot. Ah, sir, he's a shrewd fellow, he is, whatever his name may be when he's at home.'

'Which is no consolation to me for the loss of my purse,' murmured the stranger.

Then the landlord bowed and retired, and the stranger proceeded to the discussion of his homely supper. When he had drained the last drop of ale in the tankard, he wiped his mouth carefully with his bandana handkerchief, and put on a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles. Then he produced from the pocket of his cloak a small dogs-eared Bible bound in plain calf; and drawing the pair of candles close to his nose, he proceeded to read a chapter before retiring for the night. He read slowly and deliberately, with a movement of the lips as he repeated each word to himself, and with a slight movement of the head as his eyes went on from one line to the next. When he had done reading, he meditated silently for a few minutes, and then rang for a bed-candle.

'I cannot sleep shut in by those things,' said the stranger, indicating the funereal-looking curtains

that shut in the immense four-poster; 'and the room smells as if the window had not been opened for a month.'

Ultimately, the stranger decided to have the mattress laid upon the floor, and to sleep on that, which he thought he might possibly succeed in doing, provided the window were left open both at top and bottom, so that the cold fresh air of the October night could have free play in and out of the room.

'Major Gregson!' exclaimed the astonished landlord early next morning, reading the name on sundry boxes and packages which had just been brought in by the night-carrier from Nottingham. 'Why, surely he can never be the Major Gregson who fought so bravely in India and America—the son of old Isaac Gregson, linen-draper of this town!'

'But he can be, and is, and the best master in the world into the bargain,' said the major's man as he stepped into the bar. 'And I'll thank you, Mr Landlord, to tell me the number of his room, for it's high time I took him up his shaving-water.'

'Now I call it to mind,' said the landlord, 'he did say something last night about Derby being his native place. But *he* the brave Major Gregson! the great fire-eater! Why, he don't stand more than five foot seven without his boots, and—and—'

'He looks as quiet and peaceable as a lamb,' put in the major's man: 'that's just him all over. A quiet, pious, God-fearing gentleman in time of peace; but just see him going into action at the head of his men, and it would do your eyes good, and make your hair stand on end at the same time. His men knew he was made of the right stuff, and would follow him anywhere. He was called "Forlorn" Gregson in the regiment, because he had headed so many forlorn-hopes in his time. But where's the shaving-water?'

When Major Gregson drew up his blinds next morning, and peered out of his bedroom window, he saw before him the fine old-fashioned market-place of the little town, which, as a boy, he had trodden many hundreds of times. It was the old market-place that he remembered so well, but with many changed features, as was only to be expected after the wear and tear of the thirty-five years that had elapsed since he last saw it. With the assistance of his pocket-telescope, he could make out the names on the signs over the different shops. Nearly all of them were strange to him, but there were two or three that he recollected as old family names in the town; and—yes! there was one that he remembered as the name of an old school-fellow. It was the same name that had struck so familiarly on his ear when mentioned last night by the landlord. Major Gregson read the sign again, slowly and carefully: 'Thomas Crooke, Auctioneer and Valuer, House and Estate Agent.'

'Poor Tom Crooke!' said the major as he shut up his glass, and prepared to strop his razors. 'A little dark-eyed chap, always in a row; several years younger than me; in fact, I was only at the school one half after he came. I recollect him so well by reason of his great fight with Scroggins. And now he's an auctioneer! What queer changes the whirligig of time brings about! I must call and see Tom after breakfast.'

Accordingly, no sooner was breakfast over than the major, taking his silver-mounted malacca, sauntered across the market-place as far as the

office of Mr Thomas Crooke. In answer to his inquiry, a dingy office-boy informed him that Mr Crooke had not yet arrived, and that he was not expected till towards noon.

'I'll take a turn round the town, and call again later on,' said Major Gregson to the boy.—'Perhaps I may be able to hunt up one or two more old friends,' he added to himself.

So the major, with his chest thrown forward, and his chin well up; with one arm resting in the small of his back, while the other flourished his malacca; and with quick sharp glances that allowed little to escape them, paraded the town for a full couple of hours. Now and then, he would halt for a minute or two at the corner of some street, to take the bearings of the country, and to note what alterations had been made during the years he had been away. The noble tower of All Saints held him with a chain of sweetly solemn memories for a long time. 'I might have left it but five minutes ago, for any change that I can see in its grand old face,' muttered the major under his breath. 'The change is in myself—in myself.'

When he had earned a crick in his neck with staring up at the tower, he went into the churchyard, and finding a side-door open, he presently entered the church itself. As far as the major could see, he and the dead had the whole edifice to themselves, and he was not sorry that it should be so. Going into one of the many high-backed pews, he shut himself in, and then, after a brief prayer, he opened a Bible, and pulling on his spectacles, he read the lessons for the day. Then, after a quarter of an hour devoted to silent meditation, he let himself out of the pew, and taking possession of his hat, he walked out with hushed footsteps, feeling greatly refreshed in spirit.

By and by, he found himself on the banks of the pleasant clear-running Derwent. Fresh food for meditation here. Recollections of happy boyish days, when he and his companions used to come bathing here; of boating excursions; of Sunday evening walks with his mother in yonder meadows, along a path that followed every bend and turn of the river, till one by one the stars came out, and the tower of All Saints took the evening mists to itself, and became a part of them. How all these things came back to him! At length he turned away with a sigh, and strolled back towards the busier parts of the town. Over a shop-door, in St Peter's Street, he saw painted up: 'Sampson Clowes, Tailor and Draper.'

Major Gregson came to a stand on the opposite side of the street, and had a quiet laugh to himself. 'What! old Sampson a tailor!' he said. 'The biggest glutton in the school, and not far off being the biggest dunce; the boy who made himself ill with smoking bits of cane; the boy who made such a hullabaloo when he sat down on a lump of cobbler's wax, and found himself stuck fast to the form. Oh, I must go and see old Sampson!'

Major Gregson crossed the road, and entered the shop. There was no one in it but a stout, flabby-faced man, who was busy casting up a ledger. The major's hat came off with a ceremonious sweep. 'I presume that I have the pleasure of addressing Mr Sampson Clowes?' he said with an urbane smile.

'I am Mr Clowes,' said the flabby man, looking up from his ledger with a sort of dog-in-the-manger expression.

'And I am Major Gregson, Isaac Gregson's son

that used to be, of this town. You and I, Mr Clowes, were school-boys together.'

The flabby man, chewing his quill viciously, took a moment or two to digest this information; then he spoke. 'Well, what of that?' he said.

'Merely this,' said the major with his airiest manner; 'that having just returned to my native town, after an absence of five and thirty years, and seeing your name over the door, I suddenly remembered it as the name of one of my old schoolfellows, and could not resist the impulse I felt to come in and see you.'

The flabby man seemed to gasp for breath. 'It may be as you say, sir,' he returned. 'I daresay it is. But my school-days are too far gone past for a plain business-man like me to recollect much about 'em.—Just got our stock of winter-goods in; and here's my young man, who will be happy to shew you our latest novelties.'

Ten minutes later, 'Forlorn' Gregson emerged into the street, looking very forlorn indeed, leaving in the measurement-book of Mr Clowes sundry cabalistic figures written under his name, having relation to 'one pair of superfine black kerseymere smalls.' So the major went on his travels about the town rather more disconsolately than heretofore. He was somewhat cheered, however, by the sight of another name that he recognised, on a brass-plate on the door of a house in one of the most intensely respectable streets of the town: 'Dr Rufus Cropper.'

Dr Cropper was a very little man, pert and voluble. He recollected the major in a moment, and shook him cordially by the hand. 'Old Isaac Gregson's son, to be sure. School-lads together, and all that. I remember you well, sir. You have risen to eminence, while we poor beggars have been vegetating here. We have seen your name in the newspapers, sir, and the old town is proud of her son. Glad to find you think of settling in the neighbourhood. *Optim cum dignitate*, and all that, you know. Recollections of one's boyhood, as a rule, are all humbug. Life is full of humbug. If you can't contrive to "do" the world, the world will "do" you. That's my motto. Also, Take care of number one. That's another. Two-thirds of humbug to one of utility—that's the rule in every profession. Look at me. I'm a humbug. Ha! ha! But the world believes in me, and I pocket my fees. I daresay if the truth was known, major (no offence, you know), you yourself are not far from a humbug—eh?'

'Very probably not,' said the major grimly.

'Such being the case, what is the end that all philosophy teaches us? To deck the brows of Plutus with flowers; to mix business and pleasure in just proportions; to scrape together as many guineas as we possibly can, and enjoy to the full the goods which the gods provide us. And this brings to my mind the fact that I have a prime haunch of Welsh mutton for dinner to-day, and if you will take a knife and fork with me, major, I shall be most happy.'

But the doctor's hospitable offer was declined, and the major got out of the house as quickly as possible. 'Not the sort of man for me,' said the major, with a shake of the head as soon as he got into the street; 'by no means the sort of man for me. I think I will go and look up Tom Crooke.'

This time, Mr Crooke was in, and Major Gregson was ushered into a small inner office, dusty and unswept, placarded with the bills of past and gone

auctions, and pervaded by a musty tap-room-like odour, as though the atmosphere had not yet been purged of the fumes of last night's grog and tobacco. The tenant of this den was a long-limbed, broad-chested man of forty-five; dark complexioned; clean shaven; with a crafty vulturine face, and bright, furtive, quick-glancing black eyes. He was well and fashionably dressed, and wore two or three rings of price; but his hands might have been cleaner; and his clothes were mud-stained and wine-stained, and seemed as if they had not been brushed for a month.

Major Gregson, in slow courteous accents, explained the reason of his visit, which he hoped Mr Crooke would consider neither untimely nor misplaced.

Mr Crooke was evidently at a loss how to sum up his visitor. All the time the major was addressing him, his black suspicious eyes were taking note of the old soldier from head to foot. It was something entirely out of the range of his experience to find a man claiming acquaintance with him on the score of an old school-friendship of thirty years ago. But Mr Crooke was by no means devoid of perception, and had considerable powers of adaptability; and by the time the major had finished his little harangue, he had arrived at a tolerably correct notion of the rôle it behoved him to play in the little drama in which he was so unexpectedly cast for a leading part.

'Greatly honoured, I'm sure, major, to find that my name has lived in your memory for so many years,' he said in quiet suave accents. 'Your fame has preceded you, and the old town has reason to be proud that one of her sons has achieved so brilliant a reputation.'

'Please not to talk in that strain,' said the major, laying his hand gently on his companion's sleeve. 'My fame, as you are pleased to call it, is, to me, a thing of very small value. I, in my turn, am glad to find that I am not forgotten by one who knew me when I was a boy. I have been unfortunate enough, Mr Crooke, to lose every near relative I had since I went abroad, and I am, perhaps, more strongly disposed in consequence to cultivate those slighter ties of friendship which other men, more happily circumstanced than I am, might care less about. At all events, I am glad to have met you; and as I have some thought of settling in these parts, I must claim the benefit of your professional experience, and ask you to assist me in my choice of a nest where I can feld my wings and be at peace for the remainder of my days.'

'Most happy, I'm sure, major, if I can be of the slightest use in any way. Have you been long in Derby?'

'Only arrived last evening. Which reminds me, by the by, that on my road here from Nottingham I met with the same misfortune as happened to you last spring.'

'To what misfortune do you allude?' asked Mr Crooke with an anxiety in his voice that he could not disguise.

'To my being relieved of watch and purse by the same distinguished practitioner that performed a similar office for you. In plain English, I was robbed last night by a man mounted on a black mare with a white star in the middle of its forehead.'

'Ah! now I understand,' said Mr Crooke drily. 'Yes, as you say, I was operated upon last spring by the same professor, and deucedly chagrined I was.

A most audacious villain! He seems to set the whole constabulary force of the county at defiance.'

'Tell you what, Tom Crooke,' said the major with emphasis; 'it would be strange if you and I couldn't, by putting our wits together, devise some ruse for effecting the capture of this fellow! What say you, old chum?'

'I think your idea a most praiseworthy one,' answered Crooke; 'though whether it could be successfully carried out, is another matter. The man who rides the black mare with the white star is an old fox, and scents a trap by instinct. However, we can think over the matter for a little while. You can impart your ideas of it to me, and I will impart mine to you.'

'So be it,' said the major as he rose and began to draw on his gloves. 'Business pretty brisk with you?'

'Tolerable,' answered Crooke. 'You see, this is how I'm fixed,' he went on, more confidentially than before. 'I've not much business to do in the town here—I don't care to cultivate it. The bulk of my work lies in the way of agencies and sales among the county families and gentry of the neighbourhood. One way or another, I make a tidy thing of it, so I've no right to complain. Of course, it takes me from home more than I like; and I'm obliged to keep a couple of serviceable nags, otherwise, I should never get through my work, some of it lies such long distances away.'

'All the better for us, Tom—all the better for us,' said the major. 'I'll wager you three dozen of port that before three months are over, you and I between us will have effected the capture of your redoubtable Derbyshire Turpin!'

'You are over-sanguine, major,' answered Crooke with a laugh. 'But the event will shew. Meanwhile, I'll book your bet.'

WALT WHITMAN.

FAINT praise may harm the prose-writer, but there is nothing which predisposes us against a poet so much as extravagant praise; if we are not very young, and have little enthusiasm to spare about anything, we especially resent it. The unreasonable laudation (now so common) makes us as unreasonably despise its object. 'As it is impossible to conceive a world without a Shakespeare, so we cannot picture it to ourselves without this new sweet singer, Jones.' Bother Jones! We that have known Keats and Shelley, and Byron, and Wordsworth and Coleridge, to be told that there has been no such poet as Jones!

Not a little ludicrous eulogy of this sort has been poured of late upon the American poet whose name stands at the head of this paper, but he is really noteworthy nevertheless. He is the first characteristic poetical writer that the United States have produced. Longfellow is but Tennyson and water; and as for the other Transatlantic bards, they have produced solitary poems of great merit, but none which might not have been written by an Englishman of genius, who had paid great attention to the panoramas of the Mississippi or of the Prairies which have been unfolded from time to time in Leicester Square. Whitman's very faults are national. The brag, and bluster, and self-assertion of the man are American only; the fulsome 'cracking-up' of his own nation is such as would not be ventured upon by a British bard; the frequent bathos—the use of newspaper terms and of

terms which have no existence out of New York, and in which you almost hear the American nasal twang, are all characteristic. He is Yankee to the backbone; Yankee, also, it must however be added, in his outspoken independence of thought, in his audacious originality, in his perfect freedom from conventional twaddle, and in his contempt for accidental rank of all sorts. He has named half his volume *Chants Democratic*, and though they are not chants, nor anything like it, they are certainly democratic. He does not write verse at all, which is fortunate, for he would certainly not be particular about his rhymes; nor does he even write blank verse; but he has invented a certain rolling changeful metre of his own, with, as his English editor* truly remarks, 'a very powerful and majestic rhythmical sense throughout.' He sometimes furnishes long strings of detached items—very like the list of goods furnished by shops to their customers; but they are 'not devoid of a certain primitive effectiveness' by any means.

The doctrine of *nil humanum*, &c. was never pushed to such extreme limits as by Walt Whitman. If a man could gain the suffrages of the human race by flattering them with the sense of their tremendous importance, this poet would be king of the world.

Small is the theme of the following chant, yet the greatest—namely, ONE'S-SELF; that wondrous thing, a simple separate person. That, for the use of the New World, I sing.

Man's physiology complete, from top to toe, I sing.
Not physiognomy alone, nor brain alone, is
worthy for the Muse: I say the form complete
is worthier far. The female equally with the
male I sing.

Nor cease at the theme of One's-self. I speak the
word of the modern, the word *En Masse*.

Such is Mr Whitman's programme. If he did not speak 'the word of the modern' quite so often, or, at least, not borrow it from the penny-a-liner, it would be better for his fame. Also, through singing 'Man's physiology complete,' he has caused Mr Rossetti to be at the trouble of preparing the present 'Bowdlerised,' or excised edition of his works, to suit the squeamish tastes of the Old Country. So please, ladies, be particular to ask for the above-mentioned edition. There is nothing in that which you may not read, or the book would not be noticed in these columns.

Whitman's poetry reminds us, as we have said, of no other poet, but in his prose we seem to recognise some kinship to Emerson's. Here is a fine passage from the preface to his *Leaves of Grass* [the titles of his poems are unattractive, being almost always affected or unmeaning], insisting upon the importance of human act, word, thought, and the indestructibility of their results.

'All that a person does or thinks is of consequence. Not a move can a man or woman make that affects him or her in a day or a month, or any part of the direct lifetime, or the hour of death, but the same affects him or her onward afterward through the indirect lifetime. The indirect is always as great and real as the direct. The spirit receives from the body just as much as it gives to the body. Not one name of word or deed—not of the putrid veins of gluttons or rum-drinkers—not of speculation, or cunning, or betrayal, or murder—no

serpentine poison of those that seduce women—not the foolish yielding of women—not of the attainment of gain by discreditable means—not any nastiness of appetite—not any harshness of officers to men, or judges to prisoners, or fathers to sons, or sons to fathers, or of husbands to wives, or bosses to their boys—not of greedy looks or malignant wishes—not any of the wiles practised by people upon themselves—ever is or ever can be stamped on the programme, but it is duly realised and returned, and that returned in further performances, and they returned again. Nor can the push of charity or personal force ever be anything else than the profoundest reason, whether it bring arguments to hand or no. No specification is necessary—to add, or subtract, or divide is in vain. Little or big, learned or unlearned, white or black, legal or illegal, sick or well, from the first inspiration down the windpipe to the last expiration out of it, all that a male or female does that is vigorous, and benevolent, and clean, is so much sure profit to him or her in the unshakable order of the universe, and through the whole scope of it for ever. If the savage or felon is wise, it is well—if the greatest poet or savant is wise, it is simply the same—if the President or chief-justice is wise, it is the same—if the young mechanic or farmer is wise, it is no more or less. The interest will come round—all will come round. All the best actions of war and peace—all help given to relatives and strangers, and the poor, and old, and sorrowful, and young children, and widows, and the sick, and to all shunned persons—all furtherance of fugitives and of the escape of slaves—all the self-denial that stood steady and aloof on wrecks, and saw others take the seats of the boats—all offering of substance or life for the good old cause, or for a friend's sake or opinion's sake—all pains of enthusiasts scoffed at by their neighbours—all the vast sweet love and precious suffering of mothers—all honest men baffled in strifes recorded or unrecorded—all the grandeur and good of the few ancient nations whose fragments of annals we inherit—and all the good of the hundreds of far mightier and more ancient nations unknown to us by name or date or location—all that was ever manfully begun, whether it succeeded or not—all that has at any time been well suggested out of the divine heart of man, or by the divinity of his mouth, or by the shaping of his great hands—and all that is well thought or done this day on any part of the surface of the globe, or on any of the wandering stars or fixed stars by those there as we are here—or that is henceforth to be well thought or done by you, whoever you are, or by any one—these singly and wholly inured at their time, and inure now, and will inure always, to the identities from which they sprung or shall spring.' A fine lay-sermon, surely.

From common humanity our author rises to the American Citizen, with a portrait of whom he furnishes us, which will not easily be recognised by those who have only been accustomed to see English photographs of the individual in question. Other states, he says, indicate themselves by their deputies, but the United States always most in its common people. 'Their manners, speech, dress, friendships—the freshness and candour of their physiognomy—the picturesque looseness of their carriage—their deathless attachment to freedom—their aversion to anything indecorous, or soft, or mean—the practical acknowledgment of the

* Poems by Walt Whitman. Selected and edited by William Michael Rossetti. Hotten: Piccadilly.

citizens of one state by the citizens of all other states—the fierceness of their roused resentment—their curiosity and welcome of novelty—their self-esteem and wonderful sympathy—their susceptibility to a slight—the air they have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand in the presence of superiors—the fluency of their speech—their delight in music, the sure symptom of manly tenderness and native elegance of soul—their good temper and open-handedness—the terrible significance of their elections, the President's taking off his hat to them, not they to him—these, too, are unrhymed poetry. It awaits the gigantic and generous treatment worthy of it.*

In the meantime, however, Walt Whitman will try his hand.

Starting from fish-shape Paumanok,* where I was born,
Well-begotten, and raised by a perfect mother;
After roaming many lands—lover of populous pavements;
Dweller in Mannahatta,† city of ships, my city—
or on southern savannas;
Or a soldier camped, or carrying my knapsack and gun—or a miner in California;
Or rude in my home in Dakota's woods, my diet meat, my drink from the spring;
Or withdrawn to muse and meditate in some deep recess,
Far from the clank of crowds, intervals passing, rapt and happy;
Aware of the fresh free giver, the flowing Missouri—aware of mighty Niagara;
Aware of the buffalo herds, grazing the plains—the hirsute and strong-breasted bull;
Of earths, rocks, fifth-month flowers, experienced—stars, rain, snow, my amaze;
Having studied the mocking-bird's tones, and the mountain hawk's,
And heard at dusk the unrivalled one, the hermit thrush, from the swamp-cedars,
Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a New World.

He even dates from the United States era; in 1856, he writes:

In the Year 80 of the States,
My tongue, every atom of my blood, formed from this soil, this air,
Born here of parents born here, from parents the same, and their parents the same,
I, now thirty-six years old, in perfect health begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance
(Retiring back a while, sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten),

I harbour, for good or bad—I permit to speak, at every hazard—

Nature now without check, with original energy.

Yet he is so good as to say that former experience and instruction have not been altogether thrown away; he is grateful, only let it be distinctly understood, that he is under no slavish sense of obligation; that the gratitude must be reciprocal.

I conned old times;
I sat studying at the feet of the great masters:
Now, if eligible, O that the great masters might return and study me!

* 'Paumanok is the native name of Long Island, state of New York. It presents a fish-like shape on the map.'
† 'Mannahatta, or Manhattan, is (as many readers will know) New York.'

If eligible? One would think he pictured himself as an investment. You must not be put off your liking, reader, by these blots. 'Whitman is a poet who bears and needs to be read as a whole, and then the volume and torrent of his power carry the disfigurements along with it and away.' He is really a fine fellow.

Dead poets, philosopha, priests,
Martyrs, artists, inventors, governments long since,
Language-shapers on other shores,
Nations once powerful, now reduced, withdrawn, or desolate,

I dare not proceed till I respectfully credit what you have left, wafted hither:

I have perused it—own it is admirable (moving a while among it);

Think nothing can ever be greater—nothing can ever deserve more than it deserves;

Regarding it all intently a long while, then dismissing it,

I stand in my place, with my own day, here.

It is as the poet of his own day, of his own nation (as also of Humanity, though in a less degree), that Whitman is to be considered. Half a century ago, he would have been wholly unintelligible; and half a century hence, it is possible that he will be forgotten; but he will leave much seed behind him, and perhaps found a school whose pupils will be greater than their master. His messages to the Poor and Fallen (who will most certainly never receive them, by the by) are full of tenderness and fraternal love, but never of pity: why should they be pitied, who are as high as the highest, and as good as the best? Nay, even crime does not cut them off from their equality with him, or him from his sympathy with them.

If you become degraded, criminal, ill, then I become so for your sake;

If you remember your foolish and outlawed deeds, do you think I cannot remember my own foolish and outlawed deeds?

If you carouse at the table, I carouse at the opposite side of the table;

If you meet some stranger in the streets, and love him or her—why, I often meet strangers in the street, and love them.

Why, what have you thought of yourself?

Is it you then that thought yourself less?

Is it you that thought the President greater than you?

Or the rich better off than you? or the educated wiser than you?

Because you are greasy or pimped, or that you was once drunk, or a thief,

Or diseased, or rheumatic, or a prostitute, or are so now;

Or from frivolity or impotence, or that you are no scholar, and never saw your name in print,
Do you give in that you are any less immortal?

Whitman does not pretend to read 'the riddle of the painful earth'; but he takes leave to admire, after his fashion, the great Cosmos:

The sun and stars that float in the open air;
The apple-shaped earth, and we upon it—surely the drift of them is something grand!

I do not know what it is, except that it is grand, and that it is happiness,

And that the enclosing purport of us here is not a speculation, or bon-mot, or reconnaissance,

And that it is not something which by luck may
turn out well for us, and without luck must be
a failure for us,
And not something which may yet be retracted in
a certain contingency.

Yet it is Man, and not external Nature, which has
his worship :

When the psalm sings instead of the singer ;
When the script preaches instead of the preacher ;
When the pulpit descends and goes, instead of the
carver that carved the supporting desk ;
When I can touch the body of books, by night or
by day, and when they touch my body back
again ;
When a university course convinces, like a slumber-
ing woman and child convince ;
When the minted gold in the vault smiles like the
night-watchman's daughter ;
When warrantee deeds loaf in chairs opposite, and
are my friendly companions ;
I intend to reach them my hand, and make as
much of them as I do of men and women like
you.

The sum of all known reverence I add up in you,
whoever you are ;
The President is there in the White House for you
—it is not you who are here for him.

List close, my scholars dear !

All doctrines, all politics and civilisation, exsurge
from you ;

All sculpture and monuments, and anything in-
scribed anywhere, are tallied in you ;

The gist of histories and statistics, as far back as
the records reach, is in you this hour, and
myths and tales the same ;

If you were not breathing and walking here, where
would they all be ?

The most renowned poems would be ashes, orations
and plays would be vacuums.

Whitman is practical beyond all poets before him ;
and, indeed, in one sense (but not in the anti-theo-
logical one), material. It delights him to contemplate
the visible instruments of labour, and he sings, in
minutest detail, the works which they accomplish.
The axe leaps, and the solid forest, says he, gives
blind utterances, and the manifold shapes arise
in his mind's eye, which are hewn out of the
wood.

The coffin-shape for the dead to lie within in his
shroud ;

The shape got out in posts, in the bedstead posts,
in the posts of the bride's bed ;

The shape of the little trough, the shape of the
rockers beneath, the shape of the babe's cradle ;

The shape of the floor-planks, the floor-planks for
dancers' feet ;

The shape of the planks of the family home, the
home of the friendly parents and children,

The shape of the roof of the home of the happy
young man and woman, the roof over the well-
married young man and woman,

The roof over the supper joyously cooked by the
chaste wife, and joyously eaten by the chaste
husband, content after his day's work.

The shapes arise !

The shape of the prisoner's place in the court-room,
and of him or her seated in the place ;

The shape of the liquor-bar leaned against by the
young rum-drinker and the old rum-drinker ;

The shape of the shamed and angry stairs, trod by
sneaking footsteps ;

The shape of the gambling-board with its devilish
winnings and losings ;

The shape of the step-ladder for the convicted and
sentenced murderer, the murderer with haggard
face and pinioned arms.

Shapes of doors giving many exits and entrances ;
The door passing the disavowed friend, flushed and
in haste ;

The door that admits good news and bad news ;
The door whence the son left home, confident and
puffed up ;

The door he entered again from a long and scandal-
ous absence, diseased, broken down, without
innocence, without means.

These picturings may be somewhat weird and
fanciful, but they are expressed with power, and
the conception of them is certainly original and
striking. They are, however, too prolonged, and
remind one of what somebody writes of the minute-
ness of Crabbe's verse—that he was like a broker
appraising furniture.

Under the unsatisfactory title of *Assimilations*,
Whitman describes the influence of association
upon the human mind, and, incidentally, depicts
most graphically the surroundings and circum-
stances of the somewhat unenviable home in which
he himself was reared.

The mother at home, quietly placing the dishes on
the supper-table ;

The mother with mild words—clean her cap and
gown, a wholesome odour falling off her person
and clothes as she walks by ;

The father, strong, self-sufficient, manly, mean,
angered, unjust ;

The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the
crafty lure,

The family usages, the language, the company, the
furniture—the yearning and swelling heart,

Affection that will not be gainsayed—the sense of
what is real—the thought if after all it should
prove unreal,

The doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time
—the curious whether and how,

Whether that which appears so is so, or is it all
flashes and specks ?

Men and women crowding fast in the streets—if
they are not flashes and specks, what are they ?

The streets themselves, and the façades of houses,
and goods in the windows,

Vehicles, teams, the heavy-planked wharfs—the
huge crossing at the ferries,

The village on the highland, seen from afar at
sunset—the river between,

Shadows, aureola and mist, light falling on roofs
and gables of white or brown, three miles off,

The schooner near by, sleepily dropping down the
tide—the little boat slack-towed astern,

The hurrying tumbling waves quick-broken crests
slapping,

The strata of coloured clouds, the long bar of
maroon-tint, away solitary by itself—the spread
of purity it lies motionless in,

The horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow, the fra-
grance of salt-marsh and shore-mud :

These became part of that child who went forth
every day, and who now goes, and will always
go forth every day.

In Mr Rossetti's Preface, we learn in plain
prose what Walt Whitman's life has been. Walt,
it appears, is merely a characteristic appellation ;
he was named Walter, like his father before him,
who was first a farmer, afterwards a carpenter and
builder (hence, doubtless, that eulogy on the axe),

and an adherent to the religious principles of 'the great Quaker iconoclast, Elias Hicks,' of whom, if our readers have never heard, they are no worse off than we are. 'Walt—born in 1819—was schooled at Brooklyn, a suburb of New York, and began life at the age of thirteen, working as a printer, later on, as a country teacher, and then as a miscellaneous press-writer in New York.' He changed his pursuits, after the national fashion: became newspaper editor, and then builder, like his father; from 1837 to 1848, was, we fear, a rowdy, since his American biographer informs us that, during that period, 'he sounded all experiences of life, with all their passions, pleasures, and abandonments;' but in 1862, on the breaking out of the Civil War, he undertook the (gratuitous) service of nursing the wounded. He was a Northerner, of course, but the Southern sick were tended by him with equal care; 'the strongest testimony is borne to his self-devotion and kindliness;' and in a Washington hospital, when attending upon a case of gangrene, he absorbed the poison into his system, and was disabled for six months. In 1865, he obtained a clerkship in the Department of the Interior; but this was taken from him when he published his audacious *Leaves of Grass*. 'He soon after, however, obtained another modest, but creditable post in the office of the Attorney-general. He still visits the hospitals on Sundays, and often on other days as well.'

The poet is 'much above the average size, and noticeably well-proportioned. . . . He has light-blue eyes, a florid complexion, a fleecy beard, now gray, and a quite peculiar sort of magnetism about him in relation to those with whom he comes in contact. . . . He has always been carried by predilection towards the society of the common people; but is not the less for that open to refined and artistic impressions.' As 'an accessible human individual,' he is thus described by a writer in the *Fortnightly Review*: 'Having occasion to visit New York soon after the appearance of Walt Whitman's book, I was urged by some friends to search him out. . . . The day was excessively hot, the thermometer at nearly 100°, and the sun blazed down as only on sandy Long Island can the sun blaze. . . . I saw stretched upon his back, and gazing up straight at the terrible sun, the man I was seeking. With his gray clothing, his blue-gray shirt, his iron-gray hair, his swart sunburned face and bare neck, he lay upon the brown-and-white grass—for the sun had burned away its greenness—and was so like the earth upon which he rested that he seemed almost enough a part of it for one to pass by without recognition. I approached him, gave my name and reason for searching him out, and asked him if he did not find the sun rather hot. "Not at all too hot," was his reply; and he confided to me that this was one of his favourite places and attitudes for composing "poems." He then walked with me to his home, and took me along its narrow ways to his room. A small room of about fifteen feet square, with a single window looking out on the barren solitudes of the island; a small cot; a washstand, with a little looking-glass hung over it from a tack in the wall; a pine-table, with pen, ink, and paper on it; an old line-engraving, representing Bacchus, hung on the wall—and opposite, a similar one of Silenus: these constituted the visible environments of Walt Whitman. There was not, apparently, a single book in the room. . . . The

books he seemed to know and love best were the Bible, Homer, and Shakspeare: these he owned, and probably had in his pockets while we were talking. He had two studies where he read: one was the top of an omnibus; and the other a small mass of sand, then entirely uninhabited, far out in the ocean, called Coney Island. . . . The only distinguished contemporary he had ever met was the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, of Brooklyn, who had visited him. . . . He confessed to having no talent for industry, and that his forte was "loafing and writing poems;" he was poor, but had discovered that he could, on the whole, live magnificently on bread and water. . . . On no occasion did he laugh, nor indeed did I ever see him smile.'

If he does not laugh, he is humorous enough in his poems, although, it may be, without being aware of it. Under the head of *Wonders*—and if he has the bump of Wonder, I am afraid he has not that of Veneration—he thus discourses:

The great laws take and effuse without argument;
I am of the same style, for I am their friend,
I love them quits and quits—I do not halt and
make salaams.

I lie abstracted, and hear beautiful tales of things,
and the reasons of things;

They are so beautiful, I nudge myself to listen.

I cannot say to any person what I hear—I cannot
say it to myself—it is very wonderful.

The notion of nudging one's self to listen is capital, but suggests that there may be a tinge of *Irish-American* in Mr Walt Whitman's otherwise *pur sang* (as he would term it). Here is something which, while reminding one in its form of Mr Martin Tupper, would, if the idea should be attributed to him, give that respectable gentleman a fit:

Of detected persons—To me, detected persons are
not in any respect worse than undetected per-
sons—and are not in any respect worse than
I am myself.

Of criminals—To me, any judge, or any juror, is
equally criminal—and any reputable person also
—and the President is also.

We cannot more fitly conclude our notice of this really remarkable man than by quoting his most characteristic poem. It is from the *Leaves of Grass*, and is called *Burial*. It expresses very strikingly in his strange rhythm the thought that has struck most of us who have any egotism. How strange that the world should have wagged on for ages before we came into it, and how still stranger (and more audacious) that it will still continue to wag on, when we have ceased to wag.

To think of it!

To think of time—of all that retrospection!

To think of to-day, and the ages continued hence-
forward!

To think that the sun rose in the east! that men
and women were flexible, real, alive! that
everything was alive!

To think that you and I did not see, feel, think,
nor bear our part!

To think that we are now here, and bear our part!

Not a day passes—not a minute or second, without
an accouchement!

Not a day passes—not a minute or second, without
a corpse!

The dull nights go over, and the dull days also;
The soreness of lying so much in bed goes over;
The physician, after long putting off, gives the
silent and terrible look for an answer;
The children come hurried and weeping, and the
brothers and sisters are sent for;
Medicines stand unused on the shelf (the camphor-
smell has long pervaded the rooms);
The faithful hand of the living does not desert the
hand of the dying;
The twitching lips press lightly on the forehead of
the dying;
The breath ceases, and the pulse of the heart ceases;
The corpse stretches on the bed, and the living
look upon it;
It is palpable as the living are palpable.

The living look upon the corpse with their eye-
sight,
But without eyesight lingers a different living, and
looks curiously on the corpse.

To think that the rivers will flow, and the snow
fall, and the fruits ripen, and act upon others
as upon us now—yet not act upon us!
To think of all these wonders of city and country,
and others taking great interest in them—and
we taking no interest in them!

To think how eager we are in building our houses!
To think others shall be just as eager, and we quite
indifferent!

The poet considers the universalness of this thing
called Death:

Slow-moving and black lines creep over the whole
earth—they never cease—they are the burial-
lines;
He that was President was buried, and he that is
now President shall surely be buried.

But the particular illustration which Walt Whit-
man characteristically selects of Burial is by no
means that of the President, but of an old Broad-
way stage-driver. It is so graphic, that it might be
a sketch by Dickens, and yet it has a weird sort of
rhythm about it that separates it from prose of any
sort:

Cold dash of waves at the ferry-wharf—poash and
ice in the river, half-frozen mud in the streets, a
gray discouraged sky overhead, the short last
day-light of Twelfth-month;

A hearse and stages—other vehicles give place—
the funeral of an old Broadway stage-driver,
the cortège mostly drivers.

Steady the trot to the cemetery, duly rattles the
death-bell, the gate is passed, the new-dug
grave is halted at, the living alight, the hearse
uncloses,

The coffin is passed out, lowered and settled, the
whip is laid on the coffin, the earth is swiftly
shovelled in,

The mound above is flatted with the spades—silence;
A minute, no one moves or speaks—it is done;
He is decently put away—is there anything more?

He was a good fellow, free-mouthed, quick-tem-
pered, not bad-looking, able to take his own
part, witty, sensitive to a slight, ready with
life or death for a friend, fond of women,
gambled, ate hearty, drank hearty, had known
what it was to be flush, grew low-spirited
toward the last, sickened, was helped by a
contribution, died, aged forty-one years—and
that was his funeral.

Thumb extended, finger uplifted, apron, cape, gloves,
strap, wet-weather clothes, whip carefully
chosen, boss, spotter, starter, hostler, somebody
loafing on you, you loafing on somebody, head-
way, man before and man behind, good day's
work, bad day's work, pet stock, mean stock,
first out, last out, turning-in at night;

To think that these are so much and so nigh to
other drivers—and he there takes no interest
in them!

BLONDEL PARVA.

CHAPTER XIX.—A KNIGHT-ERRANT.

FRESH and bright was still the autumn morning,
when Maurice Glyn appeared at the vicarage
breakfast-table, although it was hours after the
events recorded in our last chapter. His face was
flushed with happiness, and it was with effort that
he repressed his exuberant spirits, lest they should
jar upon the melancholy of his host. He had
told him overnight of his engagement to Kate,
and the poor curate could not help contrasting
with that fortunate result the bitter end of his
own recent love-making. But he had congratulated
Maurice with all his heart, and was genuinely glad
not only that his guest had secured so charming a
bride for himself, but that he had put Sir Richard
out of court. Moreover, it was pleasant to think
that he should now have his friend permanently
near him, if at least healing Time should permit his
own continuance at Blondel; for at present it was
a hard trial to him to be so near, and yet so far,
from her he loved; to meet her in his daily walks,
and yet not touch her hand; to pass by the cottage
where he had once been so welcome a visitor. At
church, too, as he scanned his flock from the
pulpit, the temptation was irresistible to glance
towards the spot where Mary sat beside her sight-
less father, with eyes downdrooped so low that she
scarcely saw more than he. Notwithstanding all his
efforts, the thoughts of her would mingle with the
curate's prayers.

What hopes and happiness, what disappoint-
ments and despairs, grow up together in every
human crop, no matter how limited its extent, as
here in Little Blondel! And what sudden reverses
too! Revolutions wherein, 'hey presto, foul is
fair, and fair is foul,' the wretched are raised to
bliss, the blissful suddenly sink into unutterable
woe; where even the compassionate, alas, are them-
selves often found to stand in sore need of pity!

The curate started on his plodding round; and
Maurice Glyn, swinging his stick and whistling
cheerily, walked briskly off towards the manor-
house. Did ever the birds sing so sweetly, was
ever the blue air so pure, as seemed to him that
morning? And yet, if the evil demons, whose
habitation holy men have written is in the air
itself, have knowledge of human affairs, and are
at any time permitted enjoyment of it—to take
malicious pleasure in the woes of man—they must
have exulted over Maurice Glyn, and whirled the
first doomed leaves about his head with devilish
glee. Mrs Irby and her daughter—the latter very
pale, and pleading headache as an excuse for want
of appetite—beheld him from the breakfast-room
window coming up the carriage-sweep; and Madam,
with a loving nod at Kate, and 'I daresay you can
excuse my presence, dear,' discreetly left the room
before the visitor entered it.

'My own sweet Kate!' cried he, all radiant, as

the door closed behind him; then the arms that he had held out to greet her fell down beside him, and he stood transfixed.

'Good God! what is the matter, darling?'

His love-sharpened eyes pierced deeper even than a mother's; he saw that Kate was deadly ill, and from the outstretched hand forbidding his approach, and from the despairing eye, drew direst news.

'All is over, Maurice. You must not kiss me; I can never be your wife.'

If the earth had gaped, and suddenly taken the articles of furniture between himself and Kate at its own valuation, Maurice Glyn could not have been more astonished. His brain reeled, his limbs failed him; he sank down in the nearest chair, and put his hand to his forehead. Had he heard aright, or was he seized with vertigo—nay, stark madness? Or was it Kate that was mad? She did not look unlike it. Her eyes were staring out of her white face with shocking intensity; her form, with that prohibiting right hand still stretched, with the palm outward, was rigid as a statue.

'I am not mad,' she said, 'although it is a wonder that I keep my senses. Something has happened, Mr Glyn, since I last you—yes, since last night—which renders our union utterly impossible.'

'Impossible!' echoed Maurice, like one in a dream.

'Quite hopeless, Maurice. Dismiss from your mind all idea of being my husband, and may Heaven send you a wife more worthy of you.'

'Kate, my own dear Kate, what does this mean?'

'Do not ask me, Mr Glyn; I cannot answer you. It must suffice to say that we can be nothing to one another—that is, only friends. Arguments are useless; do not use them. There is a bar to our union which is insurmountable, although twelve hours ago I did not know of its existence.'

'What bar?'

'The bar of shame. I should disgrace the man who took me for his wife.'

'I will never believe it,' cried Maurice, starting to his feet, as though another had put some insult on her.

'That is,' continued she hastily, turning for an instant crimson, 'it is no sin of mine, Maurice, but of one belonging to me—my parent. What am I saying? You are cruel to thus press me. I will answer nothing to your questions, unless you torture me with asking for my hand, and then my reply is: "Never."'

'Is it possible,' said Maurice huskily, 'that, urged by your mother's entreaties, you have consented?'

'Yes, perhaps that is it,' cried Kate; 'it may be or it may not. You have no right to ask, when I have declined your suit; it is not behaving like a gentleman; it is—it is not kind, Maurice Glyn.'

Here voice and limbs alike failed her; she sat down and burst into tears. He drew his chair close to hers; but she crossed her hands upon her bosom, and so vehemently shook her head, that the bright brown hair escaped from its slender bands, and covered her weeping face.

'She shrinks and shudders from my touch with loathing!' cried Maurice in an agony. 'Great Heaven, what have I done to deserve this?'

'Nothing, sir—nothing, Mr Glyn. You have been always—Oh, spare me sir; leave me.'

'Why?' asked Maurice, this time with sharp severity; his pride was touched.

'Because I am a beggar. Yes, it is so, though I cannot tell you how it is: that to begin with, Mr Glyn. We have not one single shilling—my mother and I—which we can call our own.'

'I shall have to work the harder, Kate, that is all.'

'No, it is not all; there is the shame. How can you force me again to speak of it? How can you have the heart? There is the shame which forbids me to disgrace you—such a shame as you can never imagine. That is enough; my lips are locked; I will say nothing more. For Heaven's sake, leave me.'

'What shame, Kate?'

'The shadow cast by crime: you hear me—crime.'

'And committed by you, Kate? No, no.'

'Never mind by whom committed, sir; the shame is mine.'

'Not in my eyes, Kate, let the world say what it will. You hinted at your parent; that seems to me almost as incredible. I am sure there is some terrible mistake. Your mother shall explain, since you will not.'

'My mother!' shrieked the girl; 'O no, sir. If you have any pity in your soul, do not speak of this to her; it will kill her. For the time at least—a few days more or less—let us seem before her to be—as we were yesterday—betrothed. I beg this of you upon my bended knees.' And she suddenly threw herself at his feet.

'Rise, Miss Irby, rise,' returned he coldly; and although he lifted her with tenderness, his tight clenched lips and straight-set eyes gave token to those who knew laughing Maurice Glyn that the limit of his forbearance was reached. 'I resign your hand since you thus fling it from you, though you accepted it only yesterday. I will no longer pain you by persistence in a rejected suit. But I have my own good name to look to. Like you, Kate, I fear shame—the only shame that demands fear, however, that born of one's own ill-doing—and it shall never be said that I played the hypocrite to one who has received me as her guest; to one who has accepted me as her son. I go; but as sure as I have breath, it is straight to your mother, to ask her what all this means—unless you choose to tell me the whole truth yourself.'

She looked up in his face with passionate appeal; but it was implacable.

'I am quite resolved, Kate; you may be sure of that.'

'It is a shameful secret which I have to tell, sir; and ruin as well as shame will befall this roof if it is disclosed.'

'I would let out my life-blood sooner than whisper it, Kate.'

'Then I must tell it you—since you will have it so—Mr Glyn.'

Side by side they sat; but with every word, as the story of her father's fraud fell from her lips, she seemed to be withdrawing further and further from him. Maurice did not interpose one single word; and when she finished with: 'You now see plainly, sir, that I could never taint your name by sharing it,' he answered: 'Yes, I see; that is quite out of the question;' then added in cold thoughtful tones: 'But we can be friends,

Kate, still. It is most fortunate that you did not go to Mr Crozley. Now, I happen to know the secretary of one of these very insurance societies, and perhaps can do something.

'Oh, Mr Glyn, you do not shrink from us, then?'

'Certainly not, Miss Irby.'

'And you will even help me where I so much need help, and you will forgive me the cruel wrong which I have unconsciously done you. God send you some day'—she lifted his hand with her cold fingers to her lips—'a wife who will repay you'—

'Nay, nay,' interrupted Maurice hastily; 'we must not talk of that now. And don't be grateful, my good young lady, till the benefit has been conferred. You see this matter lies in my line, since I am a barrister; and I am just your friend and legal adviser, that is all.'

'That is all,' replied Kate in a hollow voice. 'How noble it is of you thus to return good for evil.'

'Yes; and especially to work for nothing; a lawyer to give advice without fees,' observed Maurice. 'Why don't you say that, Miss Irby? Really, one would imagine that you had entertained apprehensions that I should have acted like your charming cousin, and given information to the police.'

Kate shuddered.

'Forgive me, Miss Irby. This is indeed a most smileless matter, and needs all our wits. Before I embark upon it, I have only one word to say. While fully understanding that our mutual relation is, for the reasons you have supplied, entirely changed—that henceforth, except when in the presence of others, we are only friends, though sincere ones—still, I wish to say, that so far as yourself and your mother are concerned, my esteem and respect remain unaltered, wholly untouched by the shadow which unhappily has fallen on your name. I make myself understood, I hope, without offence.'

'Perfectly, Mr Glyn; and, from the bottom of my heart, I thank you.'

'Very good: but I think you had better call me Maurice, as you will have to do so when we are not alone: just for uniformity's sake, you know, Maurice, don't you see?'

'As you like, Mr Glyn—well, Maurice.'

'Just so; and now to business. How much is owing to these insurance companies?'

'We received fifteen thousand pounds at my father's— I mean that was the amount of his policy.'

'Fifteen thousand pounds, and the compound interest of it for ten years—that is what is morally owing to these people.'

'Heaven help us, Mr Glyn! If everything were sold to-morrow, I don't think we are worth five thousand pounds.'

'Very likely, Miss Irby; but when folks don't expect to get a penny—when they have written it all off as a bad debt—five thousand pounds, or even less, is very welcome to them.'

'You think, then, that they would not be revengeful, not cruel?'

'It would be their bounden duty to prosecute, I am afraid,' reflected Maurice, 'unless it could be shewn that such a course would be—ahem—diametrically opposed to their interest.'

'We must take no advantage of them, Mr Glyn: we must unconditionally give up everything.'

'Everything but the person who is in fault, Miss Irby. He has been punished enough already, surely. Be assured, I will consult your honour as if it were my own; but you have placed the case in my hands, and must suffer me to deal with it in my own way.'

'Thankfully, most thankfully, Mr Glyn.'

'I do not think that, as regards the insurance offices, some sort of compromise is impossible,' pursued Maurice thoughtfully: 'not that we are in a position to make terms, of course, but they may be unwilling to bear hard upon us.'

'They have been shamefully ill-treated, Mr Glyn,' sighed Kate. 'I should never feel easy for the future, if all was not paid that we had to give.'

'Just so; very right, Kate. But it is not the company I fear just now, so much as the rascal who wrote that letter. What we have first to look to, is to get your father safely out of his reach.'

'He is ill, Maurice; sick to death, I fear, from what Mary told me. My place—if I could only account for my absence to my mother—should be at his bedside.'

'You can never account for it, Kate,' returned the other decisively; 'and, besides, are not a blind man and a sick man, who travel together, mark enough for those whom your cousin will send after them, without your following to make their trail more certain? No; you must stop at home. This villain must be balked at all costs.'

'That will need money, will it not?' said she timidly. 'I think I could get a little, Mr Glyn. My mother would give me anything I asked, that is within her power, almost without question.'

'There is no need of that at present, Kate,' rejoined Maurice thoughtfully. 'The gate-keeper returns to-night. I must see him at once, and Mary too. They are both to be depended on implicitly, of course?'

'I would answer with my life for Mary; but I believe them both to be as true as steel.'

'Good. We are safe from bribery then.'

'Bribery?'

'Certainly. This Richard Anstey will not leave a stone unturned; he who wants revenge sticks at nothing. "The post after next," the scoundrel says: that gives us twenty-four hours' start. If your father were not ill, escape would be comparatively easy; but—is he too weak to walk?'

'I fear so; at least he cannot move without assistance.'

'Well, Kate, there is hard work before us, but we must do our best. As soon as I have learned your father's address from the gate-keeper, I start for town at once. I shall tell your mother, what is true enough, that important business calls me away; fortunately, Milton expects that I shall leave him for a day or two, to arrange certain matters, which need no arrangement now; whatever you have to write to me, send to this address—no, not under cover of it—it is I who am Mr John Robinson, at your service; and you may let your servant direct the envelopes: and stay; post your letters at Blondel Regis. It is just possible that the man at the office here may be tampered with; and he does not impress me as being above all pecuniary temptation.'

'You think of everything, Mr Glyn; how can I thank you enough for your great kindness?'

'Hush! That is wasting time, Kate. Consider me simply as the advocate engaged in your defence,

although, indeed, I shall have to do a thing or two which pedantic persons learned in the law might consider slightly unprofessional.'

'Nay, it is knight-errantry, Mr Glyn,' cried Kate, with a light in her tearful eyes that made them very lovely; 'and the cause, alas, a shameful one, and unfit for such as you to fight in.'

'My honour will take care of itself,' replied Maurice gaily: 'to this cause I dedicate myself. By your kind permission, I seize this glove—yes, you must let me have it—to stick in my helmet for a token; and I go to lay lance in rest against the most recreant knight and perjured traitor that ever plotted against damsel fair.'

'Mr Glyn,' cried Kate with a sudden flush of colour, 'you will not forget, the—agreement between us: never seek to cancel it; not for a moment disinter, to the misery of us both, what is dead and buried, and can never again exist.'

'Surely not, Miss Irby. We have settled that, I thought. But, ere I go, you will not grudge me your hand.'

'Good-bye, Mr—Maurice. God bless and prosper you.'

'And God bless you, Kate.'

He was gone; he had touched her forehead with his lips, just to seal their new bond of friendship; but as a lover she had lost him for ever, just as she had begun to learn his worth. He had sought her mother to take his leave. She listened, and presently were heard his hurrying footsteps in the hall; then the great front-door clanged. From behind the blind, she watched his swift-retreating form. He did not look back once—yes, once; as he reached the iron gates, he turned, and put his hand up to his hat in farewell—in farewell, but more; he held her glove within his fingers, as though he would have said: 'I wear your token in my helm, you see. I am your true knight.'

CHAPTER XX.—THE PLANS AND MEDITATIONS OF MR MAURICE GLYN.

'That this should have happened to me!' muttered Maurice Glyn, as he found himself once more upon the road which he had lately trodden with steps so buoyant with happiness, and was now about to retrace under such altered circumstances—to me, of all men—a novelist by trade, and yet not to be able to write a word about it! What materials are here wasted, for I suppose (reflectively) 'it is quite impossible for me to use them? Yes, the fate of Tantalus was a mere nothing to mine. Yet how admirably I could have worked it up! Ah, Miss Kate, what an immortality you have missed! What a fine character I should have been myself!—that is, in my own hands! And what a magnificent scoundrel Sir Richard would have turned out! But now there is nothing for it but to waste one's energies in—action.'

Self-mockery was the mask which Maurice Glyn wore, even when alone, to hide his disappointment, wounded pride, or any other uncomfortable feeling; but he did not feel the less upon that account either for himself or others. 'Poor dear girl,' he went on in tender tones; 'how she does take it to heart! As if one was morally answerable for all the misdoings of one's progenitors. I pity the progeny that shall become responsible for mine. There is no real sense of injustice among women; they have no healthy recognition,

as a man has, of what we call an "infernal shame" else she wouldn't take on so about a peccadillo—"penal servitude for life" is the view which the law takes of it, by the by—committed by somebody else; though that somebody is unfortunately her father. But it is not only women who are such fools. When a man, by some piece of political rascality, or the complaisance of a pretty wife, or the mere force of ill-got wealth, becomes a lord, how readily the son takes all the disgrace upon himself, as if "the Honourable" Mr Smith had ever done anything to earn the title beyond the giving himself airs. And I will say for Kate, notwithstanding the sentimental notions which she entertains to her own detriment, she is fair as respects others. Women are always generous in pecuniary matters (except when they are detestably mean), but they are not often fair. "We must take no advantage of them," said she; "we must unconditionally give up everything." That was very pretty of her, and right and proper. I think, at one time—before I went to Lincoln's Inn—that I could almost, if similarly situated, have said the same. But there is nothing like education—and especially a legal one—for preventing a man from doing right all in a hurry. But for all that, I tell you *what*, said Maurice, stopping short, and addressing a most respectable rook sitting on an elm-branch by the wayside, 'I'm deuced glad it's a *Company*, and not an individual that has been defrauded. It would not be nice (even by proxy) to have caused "widows' groans and orphans' moans"—I should not like it myself if my father had done it—whereas a *Company*, or a Board, my friend, why, it almost invites fraud—defies it, at all events—keeps a lawyer expressly to detect it. But to deceive *three* insurances!'

The rook flew away.

'Just so,' said Maurice; 'one *can't* stand that—can one! It would be grand, if it was not so shabby. It is absolutely Napoleonic. If I do meet with this wonderful man, how shall I ever keep my hands off him? What a temptation! What a character! A man with a policy in these times is rare enough; but a man with *three* policies, and all of them realised! What an opportunity is here offered, of which I can never take advantage! What do I not miss! What strokes of humour, nay, what touches of pathos—for I do believe that Kate has represented the man's motives in their true light. Having reduced his family to beggary by his wild ways, he reimburses them by this grand *coup*, at the sacrifice of all that makes life dear. If the *coup* were not a crime, nothing could be finer!'

Mr Glyn's reflections were here interrupted: he had reached the place where the road which led to the railway station met the main road, and up the former was coming a stranger with a carpet-bag in his hand, who called out to him: 'If you please, sir, is the village to the left or right?'

'It lies on the way which I am going; you can't miss it,' returned Maurice, scanning the stranger carelessly: he had the faculty of observation in perfection, and 'spotted'* ordinary folks at the first glance. A stout perspiring person, in rusty black, looking like an 'uncovenanted' clergyman,

* Admirable word, although probably borrowed from the jargon of the billiard-room; to spot—to know the spot ball from the plain (not always easy) at a single glance.

and with the unmistakable accent of Cockaigne, was not a desirable companion; and besides, Mr Glyn had his own thoughts to attend to, so he walked on at an increased rate of speed.

However, 'jog, jog—thump, thump,' like an elephant at the double, he heard the other coming up behind him.

'Beg pardon, sir; I am a stranger in these parts. Can you tell me which is the best inn in Blondel Parva?'

'There is only one, so you can make no mistake—the Bell.'

'Thank you, sir. It seems very pretty about here: well wooded, too, for a place so near the sea.'

'Very.'

'And a most interesting village too' (he called it interesting); 'was once a port, as I've read.'

'Where have you read it?' inquired Maurice sharply.

'Well, sir, it was printed on the margin of the railway table, and I read it coming down.'

'Ah, exactly. I understood you to imply that you had been so good as to visit us with some archaeological or scientific object—to take notes of the ancient sea-margin, perhaps. There are many curious things hereabouts.'

'So I've heard, sir. There is an abbey, or something of that, in the neighbourhood, is there not?'

'Yes; there is "something of that"—Blondel Priory, they call it in these parts. Are you a painter?'

'No, sir; I'm no painter, only a collector of old brasses—that is, the impressions of them. It's not my own affair; I travel for a firm in Wardour Street; but I have a few with me, which I shall be happy to shew you, if you will give me the opportunity.'

'Thank you; I have no time to spare at present,' said Maurice. 'I am afraid you will not find many brasses at the priory.'

'I suppose I can obtain admittance, however?' observed the stranger. 'There is a gate-keeper, is there not? a blind man with a long white beard.'

'How do you know that, since you have never been here before?'

'Because I have seen the man myself, sir. He came by the same train as I did from town, only a spring-cart came to fetch him, and not me—worse luck.'

'Oh, I see. Yes; the gate-keeper's name is Joseph Grange.'

'Thank you, sir. And would you kindly tell me where I shall find his cottage?'

'He is always on duty at the priory, and therefore you are sure to find him there,' said Maurice. 'This is the house where I am staying; so good-day, my friend.'

'Good-day, sir, and thank you.'

On trudged the collector of brasses, without once looking back, and Maurice Glyn stared long and hard at him over the vicarage gate; then, with that expression which is always written 'humph!' (as though puzzled persons became thereby paviors), he walked slowly up the lawn towards the house.

His portmanteau packed, and a note written for the curate, in case of not seeing him on his return before starting by the train, Maurice once more set out on foot—this time for the priory, where, as he had expected, he found both Mary and her father.

The three had a long and earnest talk together. As he was taking friendly leave of them at the porchless door, something on the hillside, afar off, attracted Glyn's attention.

'Fetch me that spy-glass, good Miss Mary, that Mr Milton gave your father for visitors to use—I saw it lying in the gate-room. Thank you.—Yes; there is my gentleman, who had no other business but with these ruins here, peeping and peering about your father's cottage. That suggests a little scheme to me.' The three went back, and their conversation was renewed.

Then Maurice once more took his departure, returning to the village by a circuitous route, so as to avoid his late companion of the road, when lo! who should he catch sight of in the village street but that ubiquitous personage himself, just stepping into the little post-office, doubtless to give instructions in case of a letter coming from his respected firm.

'Brasses!' chuckled Maurice Glyn, as he sat in the one-horse fly from the Bell, on his road to the station. 'My friend should not have chosen a profession so suggestive, through the association of ideas. Brasses! Confound his impudence. I daresay, now, he has just dropped a line to headquarters, by this very mail, to say the bird has flown. Upon my life, Sir Richard has not let the grass grow under his feet, nor given us much law. I have got my work cut out for me. Well: "First save the game, then win it," is an excellent card-precept; I will save this poor wretch from his pursuers, if I can; and then—once upon level ground with you, my worthy baronet—I have a little score to wipe out.'

There were occasions—although rare ones—when Mr Maurice Glyn did not look altogether pleasant; and this was one of them.

INVALID DINNER-TABLES.

If any one loves children, and charity, and cheerfulness, let him go to 66 Earl Street, Lisson Grove, and see a handful of little sick folks dine together.

In a very small apartment—8 feet, perhaps, by 16—which was once an unambitious workshop, the dinners are given on the Monday, Wednesday, and Friday in each week. Round three sides of this queer little refectory, there is a 9-inch shelf, let it be called; close up against the fourth side is a 3-foot table of plain, clean-scrubbed deal. This 'shelf' is the 'hospitable board' of the needy little guests; the table is the *buffet* of the young ladies who are good enough to come here—laying aside their novel, or their 'practising,' or their 'braid-work'—to act genial hostesses for an hour or so, and smile upon the little ones, and carve. For *dîners* are modishly served *à la Russe* at this modest little establishment, and, of course, they are *à la carte*; and, fortunately, they are able to be *à discretion* also. It is the fluctuating appetites of the young invalids themselves that allow this last. Meat at the stated rate of half a pound a corner is cooked; but as, practically, some little people can only get through a very shadowy slice, it rarely happens that those who are the most hearty cannot have their plates filled as often as they desire. What an Elysium, then, must this bright, clean, tiny

salle-à-manger be! To be able to have *enough* is a rarity; to have that of the best cooked and the most nourishing, is the realisation of a fascinating dream.

Half-past twelve is the time appointed for it; but a minute or two before then, the door is opened, and up the children come. Strange to say, all do not appear. One would have thought that eagerness and expectation would have brought the small *invités* in a loud cluster to the door; that they would have clamoured there, and have been ready to eat each other, in default of something more savoury. But these are delicate children, let it be remembered: life is ebbing low with them; their skin is sallow, their eyes are solemn and dark-rimmed; and they are too listless to vociferate, and any active movement is a difficulty to them. Besides, the poor, to whom, of course, these young patients belong, cannot be strictly punctual. They have no clocks and watches. They are in the phase of civilisation of Alfred, who had to tell himself it was precisely twenty minutes past noon by burning candles, and who could not, certainly, have been sure thus whether he took his harp in among the Danes at five minutes past one, or at five minutes to that hour. The poor of to-day have nothing in their own homes, any more than he, to remind them *accurately* how the moments fly. They pass their days in a fever of work, or in an utterly dispiriting and aimless lounge; and in either case we know how liable we are to lose our reckoning, even with a 'Dent' or 'Bennett' in our pocket to refer to whenever it comes to mind. There is much excuse for people whom poverty compels to lag centuries behind; and excuse without accusation, since poverty, like birth, is a thing over which we have not much control, and which brings with it habits and circumstances from which it requires exceptional heroism and refinement to set one's self free. But though the especial poor, with whom only this account has anything to do, came only to half the number that was expected, they came happily, and they were very happily received.

'Ah, Johnny Brown!' cried the young lady to the first little fellow who presented himself, as he made that slow circular movement, with his hand from his forehead, that is the pure 'charity' bow. 'Ah, Annie, and Kate, and Willie,' as one after one came in. 'That is right. Give me your papers. Thank you. Get in.'

Seven children had been thus pleasantly greeted, and lifted—such of them as were not big enough to raise themselves—into the form that went round the room with the 'shelf,' and then the eighth, a girl, was stopped by the matron (who was considerably more vivid than the young lady, but still quite kind) for infringement of a rule from which there was no departure.

'Your hands are dirty!' cried she. 'Go downstairs and wash them. You will find basin and towel. You must *never* come with dirty hands!'

'She is new, I think,' said the young lady as

apology. 'This is the first time you have been here, dear, is it not?'

A short and puzzled nod was the only answer. The child was one of those rough-haired, dusky-skinned little people, too dense ever to be penetrated, about as vivacious as a serf must have been of the time of Henry I. or Stephen, and standing to us, possibly, as an index of the development of that raw period. But there were smiles for her as well as for those who were better favoured; and she was kindly told to come upstairs again quickly after she had been below.

While she was absent, the young lady counted the comers, and the papers each had given. The rule of the place is, that each intended diner shall bring or send, before nine o'clock in the morning, a half-penny and an order (price sixpence) given him by a subscriber; and then a fresh order, to be again brought at the actual time of dinner, is given in exchange as receipt. These two papers and the half-pence are used as checks against each other; and it was this checking the young lady had set herself to do.

'There should be twelve of you,' she said, looking up from a yellow pudding-basin that had been used as a cheap and handy 'till'; 'and there are only eight. Who is missing. I wonder?—Ah, here comes the little girl, now she has washed her hands; and here are some others with her.—Well, now you are eleven, and we only want one. Who *can* that be?'

She, and the matron, and the matron's little daughter—a rosy child, like a bright spray of bloom among a shade of dwarfed and withering trees—looked carefully up the forms and down again to discover the absentee.

'I see!' the young lady quickly cried. 'It's Mikey—poor little Mikey! What *can* be keeping him? But we must go on; we must not wait. Fold your hands. Grace.'

Four simple lines in rhyme were said then, with all the little heads down, and all the little thin hands still; and the matron reappeared with a delicious joint of hot roast-beef; her little girl ran down for a mug of gravy; a small maid, Polly, came with plates and potatoes, and everything was ready to begin. The young lady cut several slices of the meat before putting any upon plates to send them round, and she chatted kindly as she cut, to assure the little ones that their good time would come.

'Let me see,' she went on. 'A large piece of fat for Johnny: there it is. Fat will do him good. And not a bit for Kate; she doesn't like it at all. But some nice hot gravy and a potato. There! And now a pinch of salt. Oh, how *very* good!'

She sent plateful after plateful to be handed round, and the little folks left off looking at the pictures on their mugs of water, and eyeing their nice large rolls, and one by one began absorbingly to eat. Then came the smaller cutting-up for those who were still too near their babyhood to feed themselves with anything but a spoon; and then, by the time the last of these was helped, some of

the first were ready for a second serving, and the lady had all her tender mother-work to begin again. If young ladies would go and watch her—she and the friends who take their turns with her would give them gracious welcome—they would see that, in such work as this is their highest life, and that it is excellent preparation for the wifehood and motherhood they all hope will come.

'A little more?' cried this pleasant hostess. 'That is right. I still have plenty. I only want to save some for poor Mikey; and—here he comes! Pop him into his seat, and I will make haste and send him a nice hot plate. Now then, Mikey, my little man, make haste; begin!'

Mikey was a quiet-faced little chap, with a trusting smile, a large forehead, and pale blue eyes. The small slip of an apartment was a usual restaurant to him, and he looked round at every one tranquilly and smilingly before he took up his pewter spoon. He was an *habitué*, like most of those there; but neither in this world nor in this small spot on it would he be tarrying long. He was a mere pilgrim, left behind by both parents, who had gone on some months before; and everything was a placid pleasure to him, which no anxiety or haste disturbed. A dinner was before him, and he wanted a dinner, and he ate it; cared for by a benevolent lady, who provides for him, and who has put him with some people who keep him as clean as if he were a little lord, and a certain income were awaiting him when he came of age; but he had no more thought of this than a bee feeding from a flower. As he gently plied his spoon, the ending labours of his young *convales* gave them a little leisure, and it seemed no longer inconsiderate to ask them why they were there.

'I have heart-disease,' answered Johnny Brown. And, 'I am consumptive,' said a little girl, his neighbour. And, 'Please, mine's bronchitis,' said the next. And, 'Mine's a white-swell at my knee.' And then there came heart-disease again, and St Vitus's Dance, and the too evident consumption of a poor pale hunchback, and a list of other still and chronic diseases, till the piteous tale was told. The child with St Vitus's Dance was she who had come with dirty hands, and it was necessary to part-feed her, and to altogether feed a certain stolid Charley, who, in nursery-fashion enough, had picked out all the meat cut up for him, and left the gravy and potato quite untouched; and then the bright voice of the kind hostess was heard once more.

'I have still some scraps!' she cried. 'Who is hungry still? We always clear everything up, you know: who can eat the little bits?'

Only one child out of the dozen—the hunchback—owned to any capacity, even on individual and close questioning; and the *bonne bouche* was given to him; and when he had finished, the rest had finished also, and they turned facing one another and the lady, and repeated after her the concluding grace.

'Now,' she said, 'I must count you all again, to see how far my oranges will go. I have seven, and you are one, two, three—altogether fourteen—for Lizzie, the matron's daughter, and Polly, the small maid, had taken their places on the form now.

'I can give you half a one apiece. I wish I had more; but you know it is only a kind lady who sends them to you, and we must make these do. There! Pass them on. And remember not to eat the pips. Pick them out. That's quite right. That will do.'

Half an orange, and that a very wee one, was but a poor substitute for the rich milk-pudding these young children would have partaken of, if they had been born to a well-kept nursery; but even this was, by several, left untasted, that it might be carried home to less lucky brothers and sisters for a family feast! Stolid Charley was one who did this; and five-year-old only as he was, he was surely a little hero to keep his lips from juice they would have been grateful for, and to only look at fruit it would have been momentary heaven to eat. Johnny Brown was another equally unselfish; but his years were double Charley's, and he had grown to look upon oranges with the eye of an enthusiastic collector, as productive 'field' whence he could pick up pips.

'I have a boxful at home!' he cried joyfully, as though that were the end and aim of his pale existence, and he thought all the world would appreciate his hobby.

The kind hostess saw this, as she saw everything else, and had a pleasant word for it. 'Are you going to plant them, Johnny?' she asked. 'I hope so. Don't forget what I told you of the one I planted, and that is now a pretty tree. Have patience, Johnny, and you may have one too!'

'If all planted,' observed a visitor who was enjoying the scene, 'this place would be all orange-trees, and we should have to change its name! We should not call it Lisson, we should call it Orange Grove, and how charming that would be!'

'Yes,' assented the hostess; 'and we only have to wait! I waited before my little pip budded, and at last I had my reward; and so will you, if you wait the same. But now it is time we learned our text!—as though she had not that moment uttered one! and as though the whole household, and her management of it, were not a volume of them, from the glad commencement to the pleasant end!—I wonder can any one tell me what we said last time?'

There was rather a hopeless pause, when the pale faces looked blank and puzzled, and no light came; so, as only one child, and that the biggest, ventured at last upon a part-recollection, the young lady said she would teach the same again, and proceeded to teach it.

'Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for it is right,' she said over two or three times quietly and clearly; and when the children had repeated it after her, together and individually, with more or less distinctness (Charley's version being in a whisper, and one or two others in an almost unknown tongue), they gave their little bow again, went down the stairs, and were gone.

Could anything more nearly approach the true work than this? 'Suffer little children to come unto me,' 'Feed my lambs,' and a host of other tender words echo in our ears as we ask the question, and bring but the clear answer, No. The one pity is, that the good done by this small *Maison Dieu* can only, for want of a larger exchequer, reach a comparative few. But how easily it could comprehend many, many more! Were some baskets of spare vegetables sent, there would be thankfulness and improved meals at once.

A dish of grapes—when our hot-houses are full, and we cannot eat fast enough to keep down the crop—would bring sparkles to little eyes. A gathering of peas—from such as have country-gardens, and see their peas-pods heavy on the ground and spoiling with the rain—would mean such change of diet as might enable these poor children to recover from an illness that otherwise might lay them low. Suppose a dozen people were to send a bag of rice for puddings, or some slender macaroni, with pints of milk to mix with it, and pounds of sugar! it would be such prosperity to the little establishment as would make its power double. Then, think of a little gift of new-laid eggs! or of some handy fingers manufacturing a wholesome cake, that each of this group of puny invalids might take a slice home for tea! And some of us, who have no need, are positively encumbered with good things at times. Such may be glad to know that, in refectories like this one described, food will be welcomed and eaten gladly. A small portion only of our plenty would be good seed; and instead of being the worse for parting with it, we even might enjoy what is left to us considerably more.*

It should be said, in concluding this account, that there is another Invalid Dinner-table at this little Institution. In a room below that where the small folks dine, is spread a table—spotlessly clean, and quite bright and tranquil—for adults; but visitors, considerably, do not intrude there, and little of it is to be told. A momentary glance revealed the order and the thankfulness, and that among the recipients were a bent old woman, and a fine-featured, moustached young man. The hands of this last were red and glossy from rheumatics, and he looked suffering and sad; but he stood up when the pleasant lady passed him, and seemed glad to pay her the little attention of opening the door. At the table where he sat, beer is allowed, or those who do not drink it have an extra roll of bread instead. The charge is still only a half-penny, as to the little folks above; but the adults have the option of taking their dinners home, which *in no case* is allowed a child, and then they have to pay twopence as a fine. This is inflicted to encourage invalids to eat at the place. It is found, with mothers especially, that if food be carried away, there is no knowing where it goes; at least, to a certain extent, there is a knowing where it goes. If a mother have her hungry children at her knee, can she eat the morsels she knows they want? She *must* share with them; and then the invalid keeps an invalid, and the particular good intended is not done. The privilege would be liable to abuses, too, that would not be recorded so lovingly by the angels, and so it is taxed as a luxury that puts it out of the reach of most, and is only made use of in cases that are extreme. The little walk to and fro can do no harm to an invalid, suppose he or she is strong enough to undertake it (and such as are not, are commonly inmates of a hospital), and they get change of scene, and conclude their meal with prayer, which of itself must much help to soothe. Physic may, a great deal of it, be thrown to the dogs, if these dinner-tables flourish; and we know well to which we should give the preference.

* Donations, either of food or money, will be thankfully received by the Matron of the Institution, 66 Earl Street, Lisson Grove.

LUKE LATHER.

AFTER HOOD.

LUKE LATHER was a barber, sirs,
And lived at Islington;
He used to soap his customers,
And laid it thickly on.

And yet, he was no flatterer,
For often he would carp
At what they said, and being blunt,
He took them up quite sharp.

'Twas very strange a man so pert
Could so expertly shave;
But though no one could better scrape,
He never learned to save.

His circumstances being strait,
All things with him went wry;
His funds were low, no doubt because
He held his head so high.

For it was found by all who crossed
The threshold of his door,
The more he took their beards away,
He bearded them the more.

And so his customers fell off,
Because his tongue ran on,
And since no folks came in his shop,
He found his income gone.

He tried to borrow, but his friends
Had so unfriendly grown,
They left him to himself, and yet
He could not get a loan.

He thought: 'How cold this cruel world!'
On its wide waste adrift;
And went and pawned his shirt, for he
Was put to such a shift.

He pensive grew, through lack of pence,
And melancholy eyed;
And getting quite beside himself,
Committed suicide.

And so he passed, a childless man,
The victim of despair,
(For though he hair had often dyed,
He died without an heir).

And having nothing else to spend,
He spent his latest breath;
And all who once had known him said
It was a barbarous death.

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